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[EDITOR'S NOTE: Quick check-in on the No Fucks Given Challenge:
still going strong...](#)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Quick check-in on the [No Fucks Given Challenge](#): still going strong. Today's post is unrelated, but the spirit is alive.



DAY 1: FULL-FRONTAL REJECTION

Most people live in fear of **hearing "no."**
Today, you're going to **hunt rejection on purpose.**

Your Challenge:

- ✓ **Ask for something ridiculous.** (A 50% discount on coffee. A stranger's hat.)
- ✓ **Get rejected—and live to tell the tale.**
- ✓ **Notice how the world keeps turning.**

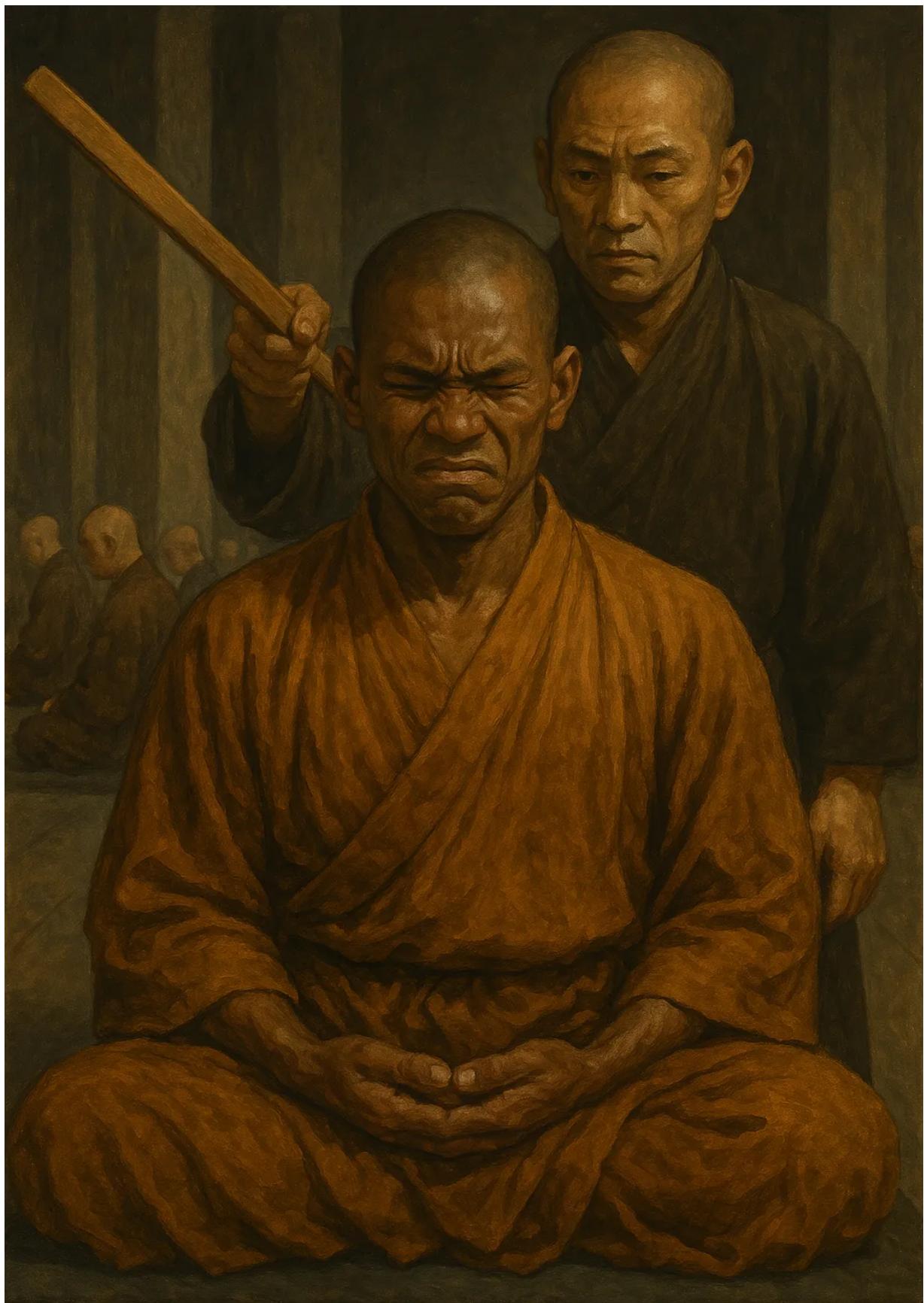
You'll learn that **rejection is just noise.** It doesn't mean anything. **It only has power if you let it.**

Ok log your results [here](#).

Or find the link pinned in the comments below if you're listening to the podcast version.

Now, let's get into it...

I Joined a BDSM Cult Disguised as a Meditation Retreat



The last time I told someone I meditated for seven days straight, they didn't ask about the Buddha or enlightenment.

The first thing they wanted to know was:

“Wait—you meditated for seven days straight?

How did you go to the bathroom?

Did you shit yourself?!”

No. I didn't.

We're allowed to go to the bathroom.

This isn't medieval torture.

Don't be silly.

Although sometimes I wonder...

If you've never sat in a real Zendo, it doesn't sound like peace.

It sounds like a badly dubbed kung fu movie—

quiet footsteps, sudden tension, then WHACK.

Socks swish across the hardwood floor.

The flat wooden stick patrols the area like a shark fin approaching lunch.

He stops behind me.

Raises it.

And strikes.

WHACK. WHACK.

Holy sweet Jesus mother of Christ.

I thought this wasn't supposed to hurt.

This is insane.

Two hits to each shoulder. Then moves on.

It's not punishment.

It's tradition.

And it's mandatory.

From 4 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

35 meditation rounds a day.

4 hits per round.

That's 140 hits a day.

Over 7 days?

980 beatdowns.

Somewhere around Day Four, I start getting extra.

No reason. No feedback.

Why? Why me? What did I do to deserve this privilege?

Just the sting of a grown man giving me the switch.

But there's no explanation.

It just lands.

Just searing heat.

Judging from the pain alone, I feel like I've been sold into chattel slavery.



Okay, maybe not quite that bad.

It starts with tea.

A silent ceremony.

The tea smells like daisies.

Tastes like hibiscus or rosehips—some delicate floral brew that makes you think:

This is going to be gentle.

Famous last words.

Then they feed you.

And by “feed,” I mean they give you rice, steamed greens, and a whisper of broth.

They don’t technically starve you—

But they strongly suggest that gluttony is a kind of spiritual weakness.

Before every meal, we chant.

Not for ourselves.

For all beings.

Even ghosts.

The prayer literally says:

“Give up your suffering. Give up your hunger. Go for enlightenment instead.”

And weirdly—

The highlight of the day is the chores.

I guess because it’s the only time we do anything at all that isn’t being silent.

We still don’t talk ever.

Not allowed.

I got dish duty.

And at some point, I realized holy shit...

We pay them to let us do their chores.

We clean in total silence.

Eventually, your legs stop working.

You sit in lotus. Blood drains.

Then comes rushing back.

And it doesn't feel like relief—

It feels like fire.

Like Bret “The Hitman” Hart is giving you the sharpshooter.



Your thighs scream.

Your knees lock.

But you don't move.

You don't tap out.

You just sit.

Still.

Burning.

I suffer so that everyone else remains undisturbed.

When the bell rings, some of us can't even walk.

We limp.

We hobble.

No one complains.

One afternoon, I'm in private instruction and from the zendo comes this guttural scream.

Full-bodied. Animalistic.

Like someone just got stabbed.

And I'm sitting there asking myself:

Did I just hallucinate that?

Nobody flinches.

Nobody explains.

We just keep sitting.

By the time anyone is allowed to talk it was long forgotten.

Everyone here believes in enlightenment.

Not as a metaphor.

Not as a lifestyle.

As something real.

It's not up for debate.

There are, to my mind, hundreds if not thousands of documented cases of people who claimed to be enlightened.

I certainly believe some of those cases to be true.

Indeed, we can trace the Zen Center's lineage of Zen Masters through an unbroken chain for more than a thousand years.

But if you walk in cold—no Buddhist background—

And see thirty people in brown robes, heads bowed, not speaking, barely moving—

You might think we look holy.

Or...

You might think:

“This is a cult. Where the sheep’s blood at?”

I wonder what my back looks like after all of the lashes.

No one tells you that holiness might feel like violence.

Like sacrifice.

Like something inside you has to die.

For most of my life, I thought I was secular.

Detached.

Spiritual, maybe—but not religious.

Turns out?

I'm deeply religious.

I just never had the right language for it.

Never met the right temple.

Never sat still long enough to find out.

But this?

This silence.

This hunger.

This stick.

This discipline disguised as devotion—

This is the closest I've ever come to God.

By Day Six, the internal noise starts to fade.

I can feel something ineffable blossoming within me.

Not into joy.

Not into clarity.

Just... silence.

It's like someone finally shut off the machinery.

And in that silence, I try to bridge the gap—

Between the self that suffers

And the self that's always been free.

I don't break through.

Don't levitate.

Don't glow.

I just sit.

Tired.

Sad.

Still.

Closer.

And somehow—

That's enough.

Because if I keep bowing—

Keep burning—

Keep listening—

Maybe I'll get there.

This is such a puzzle.

I'm searching for a truth that should be easy to find.

Feeling around in the dark.

For what?

I'm not sure.

But I know that I'll recognize it when I find it.

My sensei says that it's my search for personal gain that hides the truth.

How do you get something without wanting it?

I kept telling myself I'd go running, but I never did.

About as realistic as Jesus saying he'll rub one off with his last free hand before it gets nailed to the cross...

Before he's crucified.

This journey required my full attention.

Sad to say.

Until next time,

Anton

Dancer, Writer, Buddhist.



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